



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Salem – An historic agreement between Oregon Counties and the U.S. Government will be enshrined with a signing ceremony at the Association of Oregon Counties' 100th Annual Fall Conference in Eugene November 15th.

Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) leadership and representatives of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will sign a Memorandum of Agreement that calls for early, often and regular communication between the federal agencies and county governments with respect to federal lands in Oregon.

"By communicating early and often with Oregon counties, together we can improve the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of all Oregonians," according to Elaine M. Brong, State Director of Oregon/Washington BLM, one of the signers of the agreement.

The agreement will allow Oregon County Governments to confer with the Forest Service and BLM on management direction and projects, sharing resources and revenues and fully participating in decisions that impact the social, environmental and economic vitality of local communities.

"This agreement is a huge step forward for intergovernmental relations. It reinforces the importance of local input in the management of Federal lands in Oregon," said Wallowa County Commissioner Mike Hayward, chair of AOC's Public Lands and Natural Resources Steering Committee and one of the signers of the agreement. The Forest Service and BLM will work closely with Oregon Counties to revise Resource Management and Forest Plans. While ultimate responsibility regarding land-use plan decisions on federal lands rests with the Forest Service and BLM, the rewards of working together toward commonly understood objectives are substantial and will yield a significant improvement in stewardship of public lands.

Through the use of partnerships, contracts and special initiatives, the federal agencies will continue to work closely with Oregon Counties to implement projects such as trail or road maintenance, restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, controlling the spread of noxious weeds and fire suppression efforts.

"Our vision is to enhance our long standing relationship by working more closely together, sharing knowledge and resources, to achieve results that benefit all Oregon citizens," said Linda Goodman, Regional Forester of the Pacific Northwest Region.

The agreement will be signed during AOC's Public Lands and Natural Resources Steering Committee meeting November 15th at 1:30pm in the Wilder/Hansberry Room at the Eugene Hilton Hotel. Also on the agenda for the committee is a discussion of PL 106-393, the Secure Rural School and Community Self-Determination Act. While Oregon Counties and Federal agencies continue to implement PL 106-393, Congress is gearing up for a debate over

reauthorizing the act. PL 106-393 provides \$270 million annually for Oregon schools, roads and essential local services, supplementing other available funds.

The Committee meeting is open to the public and the news media.

For more information please feel free to contact one of the following people:

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Attachments:
Memorandum of Agreement
Public Lands & Natural Resources Committee Agenda